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## BALAAM'S BIRTHPLACE.

[From Merrill's East of the Jordan.]

It is an interesting fact that Balaam, in some of the ancient records, is connected with the children of Ammon; and we present the following suggestions in regard to that soothsayers home or country. In the first place we have Balaam's own account of the place where he belonged. "The king of Moab has brought me from Aram [Syria], out of the mountains of the east." Of the two other accounts one states that he was at "Pethor which is by the river of the land of the children of his people;" and the other that Balaam "was the son of Beor of Pether of Mesopotamia" (Numb. xxii., 5, xxiii., 7; Deut. xxiii., 4).

*Aram Naharaim*, rendered Mesopotamia, was no doubt supposed, at the time of the Septuagint translation was made to refer to the country between the Tigris and Euphrates. "Syria of the two rivers" may, however, without any violence to the language, refer to the region about Damascus. Indeed, this region bore the name of Syria from the earliest times. When the fact is considered, namely, that the region about Damascus and to the south and west as well, was called Syria, the statement of the Babylonian Talmud, Erubin 19 a, becomes a significant commentary on the word "Naharaim or rivers." Speaking of the Garden of Eden, it is said: "If it is in the land of Israel, Bethshean is its gate; if it is in Arabia, Beth Gerem is its gate; if it is between the rivers Damascus is its gate." The Midianites act with the Moabites in calling Balaam. The messengers sent by Balak went and returned, and went and returned again, making four times that they passed over the region between Moab and Pethor.

Supposing Balaam's home was in Mesopotamia, they must have passed through the country of the Ammonites and Amorites, and of the strong people occupying the regions about Damascus, or else have gone entirely to the south or east of them by a desert route, of the existence of which nothing at present is known. The distance of Moab to the Euphrates would probably occupy twenty-four days or a whole month. Here would be four months consumed, to which must be added two months or more for Balaam to "return to his place," and to come back again in season for the battle in which he himself was slain. In making this journey Balaam rode upon an ass. Would a journey of such length, attended at all times with many hardships, where the stations for water are two to four days apart be undertaken on such an animal? Only camels would be thought of at the present time for crossing the desert. Another fact to be considered is that apparently very soon, if not immediately after Balaam starts from home, he is in a cultivated country. "The angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side." Balaam's foot was crushed "against the wall," (Numb. xxii., 24, 25). In the long stretch of desert between the Euphrates and the Hawran mountains, vineyards have never existed; while on the south-western slope of these mountains the remains of terraces show that vine culture was once extensive in that section. The same is true in the country about Heshbon, and also farther north, in the Jazer and Ammon regions. Again in Numb. xxii., 5, where we read "to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people"; the words "children of his people," בני עמו are in some manuscripts replaced by children of Ammon, בני עמון. This reading is adopted by the Samaritan, Syriac, and Vulgate version. Communications between the countries bordering on the Euphrates and the Arnon must have been very frequent to have enabled the king of Moab to become acquainted with the name and character of a soothsayer, who lived in what was, at a later period, classical Mesopotamia. In view of these facts may not some reasonable explanation which shall relieve the matter of the difficulties attending the opinion that Balaam come from the Euphrates? On the other hand, Mr. George Smith, the Assyrian scholar, told us long ago, and the fact has since been stated by him in more than

one of his writings that Pethor and Mutkinu were two fortresses on the right or west bank of the Euphrates. These were held by Tiglath Peleser I. 1120 B. C. (See George Smith's "Assyria from the Monuments" pp. 32-34)

## BOOK NOTICES.

[All publications received, which relate directly or indirectly to the Old Testament, will be promptly noticed under this head. Attention will not be confined to new books; but notices will be given, so far as possible, of such old books, in this department of study, as may be of general interest to pastors and students.]

## EAST OF THE JORDAN. \*

The author of this book was appointed Archæologist of the American Palestine Exploration Society on the 21st of October, 1874, and sailed from New York June 19th, 1875, arriving at Beirut August 9th. The author had charge of the exploration work for nearly two years, during which time he made four different expeditions. The labor in the field was carried on under the advice and direction of the Advisory Committee in Beirut. Since the author's return in the summer of 1877 he has been employed in the writing of his reports. Professor R. D. Hitchcock, D. D., the president of the society, furnishes a brief introduction in which he says:

"The present volume has assumed a popular form. Personal incidents enliven the narrative. The illustrations are fresh and original, many are from the author's own drawings. The book contains a large amount of matter wholly new. The author was careful and patient in his investigations, and now tells the story of his life beyond the Jordan, in a manner equally entertaining and instructive."

Comparatively little work has been done in exploring Eastern Palestine. Attention has been devoted for the most part to Western Palestine. This has been so not only because the latter is of a greater historic interest, but also because in Eastern Palestine traveling exploration have always been attended with difficulty and danger.

"And yet," as is stated in the introduction, "the historic associations belonging to the country east of the Jordan are rich and various. Two and a half of the twelve tribes that came out of Egypt under Moses, chose that side of the river for their home. Syrian, Assyrian and Chaldaean armies marched in and out there. Some of the disbanded veterans of Alexander settled there. It was beyond the Jordan that John the Baptist began and ended his official career. Nearly six months of our Lord's brief ministry were spent on the same side of the river. The Christian Church itself sought refuge there when the Roman legions began to close in upon Jerusalem. In the time of the Antonines the country was full of cities, with their temples, theatres, and baths. In the fifth century Christian Churches, well organized, were numerous and flourishing."

It is seldom that a book of this character is so interesting. The pleasure and profit afforded in its perusal have been more even than was anticipated. The author often leaves his narrative and gives his opinions with reference

\**East of the Jordan.* By SELAH MERRILL, D. D., L. L. D. Archæologist of the American Palestine Exploration Society. Introduction by PROF. ROSWELL D. HITCHCOCK, D. D. Illustrations and a map. 8½x6, pp. xv, 549. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. For sale by Jansen, McClurg & Co., Chicago. Price, \$4.00.

to mooted questions in Biblical geography; e. g., Balaam's birthplace (p. 268), the situation of Ramoth Gilead (p. 290), the situation of Mahanaim (p. 233). These opinions are stated in an exceedingly clear manner, and, so it seems to us, are well founded. The worth of the book is self-evident. It is accurate, definite, independent, and not burdened with scientific details, for which the ordinary reader does not care. These scientific details are to be published later under the title of "Topographical Notes on Eastern Palestine." The thanks of Christian readers and scholars are due both editor and publisher for this valuable aid to Bible study.

#### THE PLAN OF CREATION. †

A few have written of Genesis and Science who were acknowledged scientists and good Hebraists. Not a few, however, assume to speak upon this subject who do not know enough of science to give their statements authority and whose acquaintance with Hebrew is worth almost nothing. The author of *The Plan of Creation*, belongs, we fear, to the latter class.

The first twenty chapters are scientific in form, and give evidence of extended reading and some ability on the part of the writer. In favor of this portion of the book, it may be said that it is reverent in spirit—a quality altogether lacking in much that is given forth by sciolists.

Our duty lies rather with chapters XXI and XXII which contain an analysis and translation of the Hebrew text of Gen. I and II. 1, 4. Here we learn a number of things for which we should be truly thankful if we did not seriously question their correctness: for example (pp. 190, 195, 204, 209) that **אֵת** means *the thing itself in its entirety, totality, sum and substance, both-also, all, each, atoms of matter*; (pp. 191, 199, 201, 214, 217) that **תְּהוֹם**, the **מ** preformative in **מְקוֹה** and **מִמְשָׁלָה**, and **בְּרִית** in **בְּרִית** all mean *the*; (p. 191) that **רוּחַ** means *force, attraction of gravitation*; (p. 203) that **מְוֵעֲרִים** means *perpetuity of time*; (p. 191) **פְּנֵה** means *condition, state, mass*; (p. 223) that **עֲשֵׂה** embodies the idea to create and afterwards form the material into something. In his rendering into English, the author makes the ordinary use of the parenthesis (p. 189). Judged by this, he has failed to recognize the pronominal suffixes in **לְמִנְהֶם**, **לְמִנְהֶם**, **בְּעֶלְמֵנוּ**, **בְּעֶלְמֵנוּ** (pp. 200, 210, 214, 216); also the article indicated in the pointing of **לְרִקִּיעַ** and **לְאֹר** (pp. 193, 196). His analysis of the Vav converse looks strange to us: **וַיִּבְרָא** and **וַיִּרָא** created; **וַיִּרָא** and **וַיִּבְרָא** saw. We submit his translation of Gen. I. 1: "In the beginning God created the atoms of matter, now forming the heavens and the earth; agitation and matter existed contemporaneous with matter." Given a theory, a knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet, a lexicon, and a fertile imagination, and such work as the above appears to us a possible result.

#### THE UNION HEBREW READER. ††

The lessons in this book are evidently so compiled and follow each other in such order as to lead to the needed familiarity with the Hebrew page. It is clearly well fitted to answer the purpose of its authors.

† *The Plan of Creation*. By R. M. WIDNEY, Los Angeles, Cal. 7¼x5 pp. viii, 280. Published by the Author. Price, \$1.50.  
 The Bible: A Scientific Revelation. By REV. CHARLES C. ADAMS, S. T. D. 6¼x4¼, pp., 176, vii. New York: James Pott. Price \$1.00.

†† *The Union Hebrew Reader*: designed for Sunday Schools, and for the use of Students. By JOSEPH KRAUSKOFF, B. H. and HENRY BERKOWITZ, B. H. 9¼x6½, boards, pp. 30. Cincinnati: Bloch and Co. Price, 25 cents.

#### KEY-WORDS. †††

We have here a complete Englishman's Hebrew and Greek concordance to certain words which are of importance in the discussions of Biblical Theology. The references appear to have been carefully verified. The book would doubtless be of value to those who are without the larger concordances and yet desire to know the Biblical use of such tenses as *righteousness, grave, soul, spirit, &c.*

#### THE BIBLE: A SCIENTIFIC REVELATION. ¶

This neat little book is a good statement of the ultra-conservative view of the relation of the Bible and science. Its style is concise, but has a vivacity that leads to further perusal. To thoughtful, devout readers it will be of interest. We found it interesting, though inclined to write *non sequitur* over against some of the author's arguments.

#### RECENT PAPERS

RELATING TO

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The Elohist Document in the Pentateuch. *The Independent*, June 8.

The Old Testament in the Jewish Church. PROF. B. C. TAYLOR. *The National Baptist*, June 15, 29, July 6.

The Key to Ecclesiastes. PROF. T. W. COIT, D. D. *Sunday-School Times*, June 17.

Job Identified. *American Christian Review*, June 22.

Fact and Conjecture. *New York Observer*, June 29.

Date of the Siloam Inscription. *The Independent*.

Late Fields in the Chaldean Explorations. *The Independent*, June 22.

**סְכוּת** (Amos v. 26). *The Independent*, June 22.

**שְׁלֵמִיאל** (Num. I. 6). DR. BAER. *The Hebrew*, June 30.

God in the Burning Bush. DR. K. KOHLER. *Der Zeitgeist*, July 6.

The Use of the Tephilin. (Deut. vi. 8). DR. MENDES DE SOLA. *The Sabbath Visitor*, June 16.

The Talmud. DR. EMANUEL SCHREIBER, *The American Israelite*, June 9, July 7.

The Oral Law. DR. ISAAC SCHWAB. *The American Israelite*, July 7.

The Mosaic Signal Words, (Num. x. 33-36). DR. FRANZ DELITZSCH. *Zeitschrift fuer kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben*, No. 5.

Woman, according to the Bible and the Talmud. DR. A. J. MESSING. *The Hebrew*, June 16.

Biblical and Rabbinical Law respecting Marriage of Uncle and Niece. DR. B. FELSETHAL. *Chicago Legal News*, June 17.

Divorce in the East. PROF. ISAAC H. HALL. *The Sunday School Times*, June 17.

The Modern Teacher of Judaism. BERNHARD DRACHMAN. *The Jewish Messenger*, June 9.

Hebrew Prophets and Anti-Hebrew Czars. DR. JACOB MEYERS. *The Jewish Record*, June 23.

††† *Key-Words*; or the Englishman's Hebrew and Greek Concordance to certain words which throw important light on great doctrines. WILEY JONES, Norfolk, Va. 4¼x3¼, limp, pp. vi, 174. Published by the author. Price 50 cents.

¶ *The Bible: A Scientific Revelation*. By REV. CHARLES C. ADAMS, S. T. D. 6¼x4¼, pp., 176, vii. New York: James Pott. Price \$1.00.